

Today, the good people of Niagara have lost their freedom.

Congress must hear their voices, their fears, and their prayers.

These papermaking jobs put food on their tables and helped pay the mortgages for the 1,880 hard-working families in Niagara. The good people of Niagara need our economic and psychological support—and they need help now, not next year.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STEALTH TAX RELIEF EXTENSION ACT OF 2008

HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Mr. REYNOLDS. Madam Speaker, I rise today—along with numerous original cosponsors—to announce the introduction of the “Stealth Tax Relief Extension Act of 2008”—new legislation that would extend to 2008 the temporary alternative minimum tax (AMT) relief that Congress enacted on a bipartisan basis last month. As the lead sponsor of a prior bill—the “Stealth Tax Relief Extension Act of 2007” (H.R. 1112)—on which Congress’s year-end AMT patch bill for 2007 was based, I urge the House to take the earliest possible action this year on a new patch for 2008.

As my colleagues will recall, last year’s AMT patch—which extended temporary AMT relief through December 31, 2007, without raising taxes—was enacted later in the legislative year than ever before. As a result of that unprecedented delay in Congressional action on last year’s patch, the upcoming tax-filing season is expected to involve significant disruption and substantial taxpayer confusion. While I remain hopeful that bipartisan efforts to achieve a long-term AMT solution will eventually bear fruit, I sincerely hope that, over the weeks ahead, Republicans and Democrats can, at the very least, work together to prevent a similar situation from developing again.

Accordingly, I am today introducing follow-up legislation that would simply extend for an additional year—through December 31, 2008—the temporary AMT relief enacted this past December. I am confident that the common-sense approach taken in my new legislation will once again engender overwhelming, bipartisan support, just as it did last year.

Specifically, my new legislation would increase the AMT exemption level for single filers from \$44,350 in 2007 to \$46,200 in 2008, and it would increase the exemption level for joint filers from \$66,250 in 2007 to \$69,950 this year. These increases—\$1,850 for singles and \$3,700 for joint filers—reflect the same dollar amounts by which Congress raised these exemption levels in December, and they represent the best current estimates of the amounts necessary to ensure that no additional taxpayers will be affected by AMT in 2008 than were affected in 2007. I have submitted a formal request to the Joint Committee on Taxation for an updated estimate as to the exact dollar amounts that will be required to achieve this objective, and I expect to receive that information sometime next month. At that time, any appropriate adjustments to the figures included in today’s bill can be made. In

the interest of ensuring that Congress can begin work on the 2008 AMA patch as early in the year as possible, however, I am formally filing this bill as a place-holder today.

Timely introduction of this bill is all the more important in light of the heightened, bipartisan interest over recent weeks in enacting an economic stimulus package early this year. I would note that the 2008 AMT patch has been identified by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) as among the more effective legislative options to help address the current economic situation. As this week’s CBO report made clear, enacting an AMT patch early this year would permit hard-working, middle-class taxpayers to properly adjust their withholding levels to provide workers additional take-home pay in each paycheck. Because the AMT patch has been estimated to save affected taxpayers an average of about \$2,000 per year, early enactment of my new legislation would be expected to increase the typical AMT-affected worker’s take-home pay by as much as \$167 per month. These taxpayers could, in turn, use those additional funds to purchase food, gasoline, healthcare, or other critical items that would help them not only meet the material needs of their families, but spur the economy as well. In my view, this is precisely the sort of immediate, high-impact tax policy change that Congress should be discussing as part of the ongoing economic stimulus debate, and I would encourage my colleagues to give this idea careful consideration as we work to craft a bipartisan stimulus package.

Clearly, the AMT patch stands on its own merits as a matter of tax policy and fairness, as evidenced by the House’s overwhelming 352–64 vote on the free-standing 2007 patch last month. Regardless of whether my new AMT patch legislation covering 2008 is included as part of the forthcoming stimulus package or is considered separately at a later date, I stand ready to work with members on both sides of the aisle to prevent this needless tax increase on millions of America’s middle-class taxpayers, while also ensuring that we avoid other unwarranted tax increases that would further endanger our economy. Working together, I am confident that we can once again protect taxpayers from an unwelcome tax hike due to the AMT, and that we can do so in a much more responsible manner than occurred last year.

HONORING HAROLD C. HILL

HON. MIKE FERGUSON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 17, 2008

Mr. FERGUSON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that I recently honored Harold C. Hill of the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad with the top award at the First Annual Volunteer Awards Breakfast, which I held in Bridgewater, NJ, November 29, 2007.

Offering one’s time and energy to help others and make a difference is what being a member of a community is all about, and I created this event and award to recognize the importance of volunteering in our society. In preparation for the event, I contacted numerous volunteer organizations in New Jersey’s Seventh District—which includes portions of

Hunterdon, Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties—and asked them to nominate an individual who has made exceptional contributions to the community.

I was thrilled to see the number of nominations we received. Any of our nominees are worthy of recognition, and my staff and I were faced with the difficult task of selecting a recipient of our top award.

In the end, we found Mr. Hill to be the most notable of the many outstanding candidates, and I am sure anyone who knows him and is familiar with his dedication to his community was not surprised. He was born and raised in Scotch Plains, NJ, and has served for 50 years as a member of the town’s rescue squad, an all-volunteer organization that serves and protects more than 25,000 residents.

Records indicate that during his service, Mr. Hill has answered more than 12,300 calls for assistance to the residents, businesses and visitors of Scotch Plains, and he still actively rides as an emergency medical technician answering more than 250 calls a year. He also has been instrumental in assisting the squad in maintaining and upgrading ambulances and equipment, and is an exemplary role model to other members of the squad.

As devoted as he has been to serving his community, perhaps Mr. Hill’s most impressive service was to his country. He is an American hero who served honorably in the Korean war, was twice wounded and was decorated with the Purple Heart.

It is with great pride that I thank and congratulate all of our nominees for their service and recognize Harold Hill for his exceptional commitment to others.

CONDEMNING ASSASSINATION OF FORMER PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER BENAZIR BHUTTO AND REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT OF UNITED STATES TO ASSIST PEOPLE OF PAKISTAN

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 912.

Benazir Bhutto was a leader for her people. In 1988, she won the first free democratic elections after 20 years of military rule. Not only one of the youngest leaders in the world, she became the first woman to head an Islamic country. Prime Minister Bhutto pushed for equality between men and women through supporting the modernization of Pakistan. She built schools around the country and brought electricity to rural areas. She pushed housing, hunger, and health care to the top of her priority list.

On October 18, 2007, as she returned to Pakistan from exile in London, a failed assassination attempt nearly claimed her life. Despite the clear danger to herself if she continued campaigning in Pakistan, she chose to stay, firm in her desire to pursue the democratic and modernization goals for her country. However, on December 27, 2007, terrorists succeeded in their attempts on her life, assassinating Benazir Bhutto. Although Bhutto has